

Published October 6, 2010 on www.reflector.com

Leadership guru addresses chamber

Author and former CEO and president of Up with People Tommy Spaulding spoke Tuesday at Rock Springs Center as part of the Greenville-Pitt Chamber of Commerce's leadership series luncheon.

Spaulding has become a guru of sorts on the topic of leadership. He overcame dyslexia and poor grades in both high school and college to eventually lead Up With People, the largest non-profit organization in the world.

Spaulding told the crowd the story of how he, as an East Carolina University graduate with 2.0 grade-point-average, earned a prestigious Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship to get an MBA in Australia.

He faced competition for the scholarship from Harvard, Yale and Princeton graduates with perfect academic records. But his experience with his roommate in college who was paralyzed in their freshman year and his rejection from 35 law schools pulled at the heart strings of the committee and he got the scholarship.

He said that it was his treatment of the bartender at the hotel where the scholarship committee held interviews that got him the award. The committee was deadlocked between picking Spaulding and a Harvard graduate, when the chairman asked the bartender what he thought.

Spaulding had spent hours talking to the bartender about his life and family while the other applicants ignored him.

They saw my heart and my passion and they overlooked my grades, he said.

Every single person has a chance to change the world if you look at life differently and find a way to love everyone.

Spaulding's book *It's Not Just Who You Know* was released in August. It describes ways to build important and lasting relationships as part of a successful life.